BISS Biodiversity Information Science and Standards

Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 3: e46908
doi: 10.3897/biss.3.46908

OPEN ACCESS

Conference Abstract

Strengthening Biodiversity Informatics and Data Mobilisation Efforts Nationally and Regionally through SANBI-GBIF and the African Coordinating Mechanism

Fatima Parker-Allie ‡

‡ South African National Biodiversity Institute, Cape Town, South Africa

Corresponding author: Fatima Parker-Allie (f.parker@sanbi.org.za)

Received: 27 Sep 2019 | Published: 08 Oct 2019

Citation: Parker-Allie F (2019) Strengthening Biodiversity Informatics and Data Mobilisation Efforts Nationally and Regionally through SANBI-GBIF and the African Coordinating Mechanism. Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 3: e46908. https://doi.org/10.3897/biss.3.46908

Abstract

Africa is a continent grappling with many challenges, but it is also alive with possibility and booming with optimism. To some, Africa is the birthplace of humankind, a place with exceptional beauty, brimming with amazing wildlife and human ingenuity. To others, its narrative has evolved from yesterday's story, a story of everything gone wrong, a history of extractive resource utilisation by foreign interests, a 'dark continent', to an Africa Rising. A place "not so dark', to a continent with significant foreign direct investment that has increased over time.

Africa is one of the most megadiverse continents in the world. It boasts a substantial share of the world's biodiversity, including one-fifth of all mammal species and one-quarter of all bird species. Despite this, African species are dramatically underrepresented in the world's freely-accessible biodiversity information resources. It was reported that only 4% of the >1 billion records available through the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) concern African biodiversity, the majority of which were published by non-African institutions. Even within Africa, distributional biodiversity databases exhibit strong spatial bias due to uneven

© Parker-Allie F. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

efforts in sampling, storing and sharing data, which may, in turn, reflect high regional variation in capacity, funding and political will.

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) is a knowledge-based organisation, where biodiversity information is the key resource that drives research and innovation, informs planning and policy development processes, informs decisions and is the basis for evaluating progress and impact. It is therefore important that biodiversity and biodiversity information are managed as strategic assets that will leverage shared value, supporting sustainable decisions towards the broader developmental objectives. In light of this, SANBI-GBIF has developed a regional engagement strategy and has been identified to lead the regional African Coordinating Mechanism (ACM) for biodiversity informatics on the African continent. The ACM is the ultimate *vision for a formal regional structure* for biodiversity information management and has been identified as far back as 2010, by the GBIF Africa Nodes, as a requirement to foster the implementation of the GBIF strategic plan in Africa.

Six strategic priority areas to advance the biodiversity informatics efforts (driven by the GBIF-Africa Nodes and strategically identified partners) have been identified, across the value chain to support the generation, management, publication and use of biodiversity information for conservation, decision-making and sustainable development in Africa. These strategic areas include: 1. data mobilisation, 2. the data-science-policy interface 3. capacity building in biodiversity information management, 4. leveraging science technology and innovation, 5. regional engagement 6. growing the community of practice. Capacity development has also been identified as critical to ensure advancement of the biodiversity informatics agenda.

Keywords

Africa, biodiversity informatics, data mobilisation, capacity development, coordination

Presenting author

Fatima Parker-Allie

Presented at

Biodiversity_Next 2019

Hosting institution

South African National Biodiversity Institute